

**Meeting Minutes – Indiana Native American Indian Affairs Commission (INAIAC)  
Civil Rights Subcommittee**

Wednesday, June 24, 2015

10:00am – 11:00am EDT

Via Conference Call

The Civil Rights Subcommittee meeting was called to order at 10:05am EDT

**Commissioners Present:** Chairman John P. Warren, Chief John Boyd, Dave Liebel  
Commissioner Tracy Locke also joined the meeting and has expressed an interest in being a member of the Civil Rights Subcommittee.

**Staff Present:** Kerry Steiner, Executive Director

**Invocation:** Chairman John P. Warren

**Agenda Item: Use of R-word in Schools**

Kerry Steiner provided an update about how schools in other states have eliminated the R-word and most have done it at the district level. John Warren asked to look into seeing whether the Civil Rights Subcommittee can recommend a resolution to the Commission that the R-word is considered offensive.

John Warren will provide a POC at the Michigan Civil Rights Commission regarding a study they did on the impact and effects of the R-word on self-identity; it's a continuance of the type of historical trauma caused by boarding schools, etc.

Dave Liebel agreed that seeing what neighboring states have done regarding the impact would be valuable and suggested the director contact other states to see if they have commissions and how they've handled it. Kerry Steiner added that there used to be an entity called the Governors Interstate Indian Council; however, they dissolved several years ago as a formal entity. There are a few state Commissions that are networked informally.

A member of the public mentioned efforts were put forth in the mid-1990s to try and eliminate the word but the group doing so was informed it had to be approached at the district level and action would only occur if a parent of a child filed a complaint. It was suggested that change take place at the upper levels of the Department of Education.

**Agenda Item: Spiritual Ceremony in Correctional Facilities**

Several DOC facilities observed the Battle of the Little Bighorn anniversary by providing feasts. Dave Liebel, Kerry Steiner and a couple of volunteers attended some of the events as a show of support. Dave Liebel reported that the Miami Correctional Facility received a new drum and needs to properly dispose of the old one. Kerry Steiner reached out to the Miami of Indiana and John Warren provided a contact number for a member of the Miami of Oklahoma to see if they would accept this request. Dave Liebel said he would like to see the Civil Rights Subcommittee agree as a group on how to resolve sensitive issues so the decision does not rest solely on him or the Department of Correction. He agreed to find out more about the history of the old drum and its condition before we move forward.

Kerry Steiner reported that a member of public has made a ceremonial pipe and would like to donate it to the Department of Correction. Dave Liebel indicated the Miami Correctional Facility would be the recipient.

Kerry Steiner also reported having received a letter from a member of the public who had attended the May 20, 2015 INAIAC meeting and expressed a concern with not being able to use his sacred pipe at naming and burial ceremonies. A member of the public stated the American Indian Council holds their meetings in a public place (the Boone County 4-H Grounds) and they approached the staff ahead of time and explained smudging and that it fell within their rights under the American Indian Religious Freedom Act (AIRFA) and the staff was agreeable to letting them smudge. John Warren suggested trying to find a balance between spiritual needs and not creating hostility and Dave Liebel added that although State of Indiana buildings are “smoke free” that smudging and the use of a ceremonial pipe are allowed, although in some situations accommodations must be made such as not permitting any smoke near a facility’s infirmary. John Warren added that smudging is not done in hospital rooms, for example, and that it may be appropriate to use a feather instead of the pipe and that it’s a matter of being willing to compromise these situations in a good way. Dave Liebel added that AIRFA offers the language to cover this.

### **Intern’s Research**

Kerry Steiner reported that it’s been a challenge connecting with the interns now that school is out and she will continue to try and do so. John Warren added that it’s important we make clear that the certificates of appreciation are only awarded to those who turn in quality work in the timeframe it was agreed upon, which is the end of July.

### **Educational Materials for DOC**

As a follow-up to the discussion held during the Civil Rights Subcommittee meeting on May 14, 2015, Kerry Steiner asked Dave Liebel the best way to create and distribute educational videos, DVDs, etc., by way of YouTube, Skype and/or CCTV within the Department of Correction. He recommended we find things on DVDs or that can be downloaded since the facilities have the equipment for them. John Warren asked if the DOC has an IT person and if we could get someone to assist us with filming cultural teachings and develop them as DVDs over a period of one to two years. Kerry Steiner added that a YouTube channel was recently created for INAIAC; however, Dave Liebel added that access to the internet is not always a viable option.

The goal of these videos was discussed, such as creating ones about singing, dancing, smudging and cultural events or ceremonies such as feasts and dances from different tribes; another angle might be to do interviews where people are asked questions such as why they dance and the meaning of their regalia. Dave Liebel recommended we get a release form that outlines the purpose of the videos and to give people the option as to where it’s used, i.e., the internet, education, DVD, etc. Dave Liebel also suggested we focus on Native life in Indiana and use area interns or connect with colleges such as the IU School of Journalism. John Warren offered that we could invite someone from the media to help formulate plans and goals based upon the Commission’s decision. Dave Liebel and Kerry Steiner will work together on inviting media reps to our meeting.

Tracy Locke suggested these DVDs also fit the goals of the Education Subcommittee. Dave Liebel

suggested bringing in historians from the historic tribes of Indiana and Chief John Boyd said the Wea Tribe has a historian who has written some books on the Wea and Miami.

The Civil Rights Subcommittee meeting adjourned at 11:25am.